

*Middle Schools create a supportive environment to reach all adolescent learners. Students at Titusville Middle School celebrate learning achievements AND nurture their "inner authors" through...*

# MIDDLE MATTERS

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## A Tribute to the Past

by: Gavin Griffin

What comes to mind when you hear the word "Hero"? Batman? Superman? Some fictional comic book character with a cape and a mask? For me, the true heroes were those who risked everything to keep freedom alive in the United States of America. Young men in WWII joined up with the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Corps to fight against evil. Sometimes, they were forced to fight in harsh conditions: rain, heat, mud, sleet, hail, and worst of them all: snow.

It's December, 1944. It's midnight, but you're wide awake. You never know when a German artillery barrage will begin, with shells exploding all around you. Some even

hit trees, flinging splinters all about. As you wait there, you notice that you can no longer feel your fingers, with the temperatures plummeting into the negatives. But you sit there in fear. Brushing snow off your shoulders, you stand up and begin your nightly patrol route into enemy territory. This is exactly what our GIs in WWII had to do, while civilians back in the states cozied up in their beds, warm and safe.

Those of us in the First Infantry Junior Reenacting Group believe there is not enough recognition for our veterans. That is why we do what we do. That is why, in the middle of winter, snow up to our knees, we marched

out into the woods in full uniform, to reenact the Battle of the Bulge. We stood out in the cold, doing what the soldiers in 1944 did. We want Veterans to know that we remember their sacrifices, and feel that this is the best possible way to do that.

We filmed our day of patrols, defending positions, and trying to keep warm. I will personally be putting our video on my WWII Reenacting Youtube channel. I encourage veterans to watch this, as well as my other videos, and comment with their personal opinions, as well as their own stories. To all veterans, I say thank you for your service and sacrifice.



Gavin Griffin, author of the articles above & below, along with CJ Bromley and Chase Mong advance toward the enemy in a reenactment of the Battle of Caen. These students enjoy doing reenactments in all kinds of weather.

## The First Infantry Junior Reenactors

by: Gavin Griffin

What do you think most 12 and 13 year-olds do in their spare time? They play video games, ride bikes, and watch *Spongebob*. That is not the case for those of us in the original First Infantry Junior Reenactors. We read books, travel to reenactments and historical sites, and watch documentaries relating to World War II. For a few of us, this "odd" way of passing time has been our way for our entire lives. We have always been passionate about history, especially American military history, and have always been different from the ordinary kid.

When I was about 7 or 8, I met C.J. Bromley, somebody just like me. We bonded over our military gear collec-

tions, talked about military museums we have visited, discussed our favorite military movies and documentaries, and instantly became the best of friends. As I started going to his house almost every weekend and playing soldier in his backyard, my love of military history grew, and so did our little troop of history buffs.

We found Burtis Franke, a somewhat normal kid, who we have taught everything we know. He thought it was cool, and soon joined us in our weekend rituals. After a few years of the three of us getting together, we felt there was something missing. It was at about this time that Tanner Jackman came into the mix. When he joined our

group, we started thinking- What if we had a real Reenacting group?

We soon assigned ranks to each of the 4 of us- I was a Lieutenant, C.J. a 2nd Lieutenant, Tanner a first sergeant, and Burtis a tech sergeant. We decided, late in our 6th grade year, to make our first short film - "The Battle of Caen".

After that point, we started doing more and more as a group, making "The Road To Remagen", "The Battle of La Drang", and, eventually, The "Patrol in The Ardennes". We started really getting into it, practicing lines, studying acting techniques, and watching clips of film from other movies to inspire our next film.

## Wizard of Weird

by: Ella Matteson

It was a gloomy, dreary Sunday afternoon, I was stuck in Barnes and Noble because of a horrific storm. The trees thrashed and the wind was whistling like a thousand Blue Birds. Lightning was striking like a cat pouncing on a mouse. When in a big whoosh it all stopped. There was no more lightning, or wind. With a jerk and a swish a bag was quickly forced over my head, and everything was black.

I am quite sure that I passed out; I still have no idea what happened to me earlier. When I had woken up, the bag was removed from my head, and I was strung up to a chair. Suddenly a strange figure that crept from the shadows appeared.

"Good Evening," he said with a dark and raspy voice. "I am the Wizard of Weird; my apologizes for scaring you and taking you like that, but you wouldn't have come if I asked." "So, why am I here, out of the thousands of people in the world why me?"

"Well you see Miss. Matteson, there is an issue in another universe. In the place called PSRB101 the king and queen fight just like cats and dogs. They have become so harsh towards each other that a horrid civil war happened. "Wait, hold up a minute; it happened?"

"Yes," he mumbled, "We will have to go through time to fix everything for the better so my homeland of wizardry will be safe once more." And with a swish and a swoosh he was gone once

more. All throughout the night I sat and pondered, is this stranger trust-worthy? Will he ever take me home? While I was deep in my thoughts I fell asleep, just waiting and wondering what the morning had to wait for me, maybe another adventure.

I was sound asleep on the chair until he had awakened me. "Rise and shine," he said with a bounce.

I knew that before I helped him do anything I had to set things straight with him. "So give me three reasons why you are trustworthy and why I should help you, but first if you want any help I suggest you untie me from this chair.

He hesitated at first, but eventually set me free like a prisoner getting out of jail. Across the long and dark hallway, there lay a little old mutt. As I walked closer, he barked and yipped like a child screaming. "Don't get too close," the wizard warned me "He will bite."

Instantly I began walking backward. "Here are three extravagant, magnificent, reasons why you shall help me. Number one: I am dearly old and need such a juvenile human like yourself to help me." You are surely right about the old part, I thought.

"Number two: PSRB101 is in terrible danger and eventually the citizens will move to Earth, and it will overpopulate, and everyone will die. Number three: you are the one that the lords sent me to; they wouldn't have just randomly picked you;

you are special. So child will you help me?" He had good points, plus Earth will die if I don't "Yes I will help you." "Great!" He said with joy, "Eat up; you'll need plenty of energy."

He entered the room with a bounce and joy. "Today is the day! I'll finally get my home back; for so long I have wanted this and now it will finally happen. Come along," he mumbled. "Hold on to my hand," and in a zip and a flash we were off.

Space was a amazing sight, the planets and stars. I was amazed. Everything was bright and pretty except for one. It was PSRB101. Suddenly my heart dropped, "Oh gosh, I didn't realize it was that bad. When we landed, there was garbage everywhere, left and right. "Run!" I kept hearing that word over and over in my head. He had a deep scratchy voice, and repeated, saying "RUN!" with an urge.

"Don't listen to the voices inside your head," Wizard of Weird said, "It's the evil around us speaking. Now we must hurry to fix the machine or we will be too late.

He had led me to a cave. I believe it was his home. Inside there was a rusty big blob of metal. "I know you are quite smart, so what have I done wrong? I inspect every little piece."

"This rod is not in place correctly," I said like I was superior. Suddenly I was back in my room, in my bed. It was eight O' clock. Did I dream about the Wizard of weird? Or was it reality.



CJ Bromley, middle, and Tanner Jackman, right, along with another reenactor from Pittsburgh posed for a picture in the snow. Here they were reenacting the Battle of the Bulge.